

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

08-284

Orleans

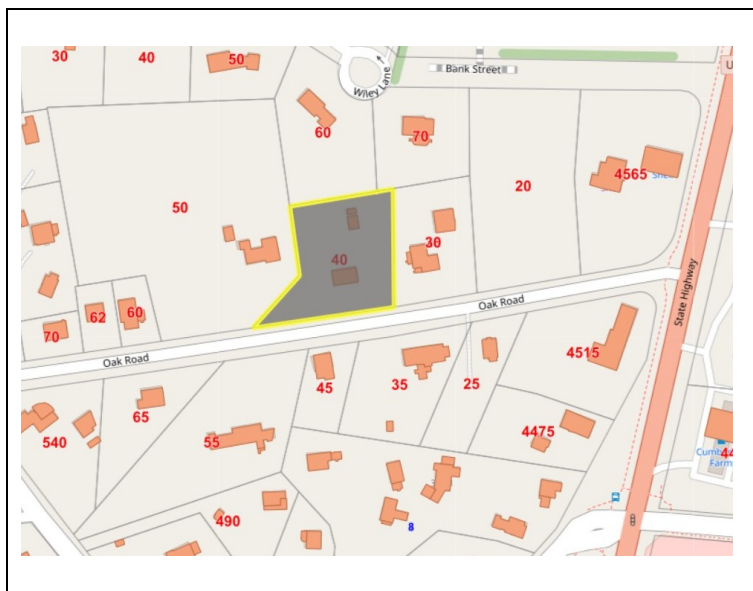
EAS.1307

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for
Organization: Eastham Historical Commission
Date (month / year): April 2025

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): North Eastham

Address: 40 Oak Road

Historic Name: Gertrude and Arthur T. Benner, Jr.
House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1937

Source: Deed research, 1938 USGS aerial photo

Style/Form: Colonial Revival (Cape var.)

Architect/Builder: Unknown/ Arthur T. Benner, Jr.

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete block

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage, mid-20th c. (see Photo 3)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

None on record

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.70 acres

Setting: This property is sited on the north side of Oak Road just west of the State Highway. The surrounding area includes modest houses built in the mid- to late-20th century, and a professional office. This house is set back from the street. The parcel is left open in front of the house with a rail fence along the street. A dirt track driveway at the east side of the parcel leads to a garage behind the house.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

40 OAK ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Gertrude and Arthur T. Benner, Jr. House, built in 1937, could be described as a Colonial Revival-style variation on a Full Cape. The form of this house consists of a 1 ½-story, side-gable, rectangular block. The house rests on a concrete block foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles and a brick chimney rises in alignment with the front door. The front elevation has the five-bay composition typical of the Full Cape form but the windows and door are not evenly arrayed across the front elevation and the door is not centered. The front door surround is the primary feature characteristic of the Colonial Revival style with its prominent pilasters (flat columns) ornamented with raised diamond panels in the capitals. The windows consist primarily of wood, single-glazed, 6/6 double-hung sash set flat surrounds with projecting sills. If not original, the 6/6 windows are the appropriate muntin pattern for the style. The surrounds of the windows are door on the front elevation about the roof entablature.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

As can be seen on the 1910 Barnstable County Atlas (Figure 2), Oak Road was located south of the North Eastham Train Station, and connected the County Road (aka State Highway) to Massasoit Road where Brackett General Store was located. The store was cited as a reference point in early-20th century parcel descriptions on Oak Road.

This house was built on land that Arthur T. Benner, Sr. sold in 1936 to his son, Arthur T. Benner, Jr.¹ Benner, Jr. was the son of Gladys Dorothea Weekes who had married Maine native and Eastham hotelier Arthur Thayer Benner, Sr. in 1914. By 1929 Benner Sr. was a farmer, and he and his wife lived on the State Highway with their children Arthur T. Jr., Louie A., and Dorothea M. The Benners were divorced by 1940 but appear to have lived next door to each other.

This house has an Assessor date of 1937. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) began conducting Cape-wide aerial photographic surveys in 1938. In that first series, this house is shown as one of three along Oak Road (Photo 4). Arthur T. Benner, Jr. (1916-1995) was only 22 years old when he acquired this land in 1936. Like so many men in Eastham during this period of transition to a seasonal economy, he worked as a house carpenter, so it is likely that he had a hand in building his own house.

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 520/ Page 154.

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This was also when he married Gertrude Penttinen (1913-2002). Her parents were born in Finland and she was raised in Wellfleet. The year before her death in 2002, Gertrude Benner sold this house to Patricia Hamilton of Shamong, NJ.² The sale was for \$1, and Gertrude retained a life interest, so they clearly had a connection (yet to be discovered).

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

1910 Map, *Atlas of Barnstable County*, Boston, MA: Walker Litho. & Publishing Co., 1910.

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<https://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Sturgis/#panel=home>.

Dunham's 1929 Eastham (Mass.) Street Directory.

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Town of Eastham Tax Commitment Books. 1902-57.

United States Geological Survey. Aerial Survey 1938-2020,

<https://www.capecodcommission.org/our-work/cape-cod-chronology-viewer/>.

www.ancestry.com - Vital records.



Photo 2. View looking north.

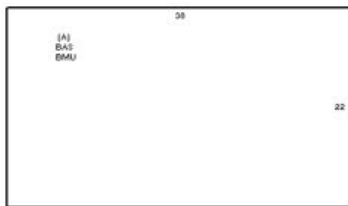


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.

² Book 14567/ Page 253.

